DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Meeting Notes

LGBTQ Steering Committee Meeting
February 23, 2011
5:30-7 p.m.
DCPS Central Office

Overview:

DCPS is developing a comprehensive plan for supporting the DCPS Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) community of students, staff and families. A newly formed LGBTQ Steering Committee of students, school administration and staff, parents and community experts will guide DCPS in the development and implementation of the plan. This was the second meeting of the LGBTQ Steering Committee.

Attendance: five DCPS students, three DCPS parents, three national and community experts, ten school-based staff, six DCPS Central Office staff

Notes:

Issue	Comments
Purpose, goals and expectations	This steering committee has been convened by the Office of Youth Engagement in the DCPS Central Office. There are two goals to this meeting: to review recommendations from past "listening sessions" and national resources and to continue planning how to create a welcoming and respectful community for LGBTQ students, staff and families in every school. Face-to-face meetings are held monthly, and there are opportunities to provide additional feedback on the committee's work in between meetings via email.
Review of listening session and other data	Listening sessions to gain community input for this work has continued. In the past month, data were gathered through listening sessions with high school students on the OSSE/DCPS Youth Advisory Committee Members and DCPS workers. **Student Feedback** *Improving Skills and Knowledge of School-Based Staff:* - Much of the feedback from the students centered around ensuring that staff are non-judgmental, and that it should be widely known in the school communities that staff are non-judgmental and can be trusted. - Principals need to know about their students and how they act, and they need to at least try to understand what youth are going through. Schools should really look at what the needs are for their students and then act according to those needs.

Promoting Positive School Culture:
- GSAs need to be treated equally to other groups.
- They suggested using designated weeks and days for our work (No Name Calling Day, etc.) or making up our own.
- Agreement among the students that we need to really break down biases and myths and be kind to one another.

Creating an Inclusive Work Environment:
- Diversity should be widely celebrated, there should be no bullying of staff or students, and everyone should be enforcing this.

Welcoming All Families:
- In order to get students and families to participate in programs, there should be lots of advertisement, food, entertainment, etc. Outreach should happen well in advance.

Linking Schools and Communities:
- Information about resources should be widely available, and the schools should use them.

School Based Social Worker Feedback
Improving Skills and Knowledge of School-Based Staff:
- As always, we heard that professional development is important, should be normalized, and should include anti-gay bullying workshops, the importance of being more LGBTQ friendly as a school and sensitivity training
- As the youth expressed, staff also expressed the importance of administration being on board and made aware of individual student, staff and family needs.
- Use departmental and collaborative meetings as times to express commitment to this work as well as work through trainings, as a safe space and forum for staff to express their needs and frustrations, and to share what works.

Promoting Positive School Culture:
- We also heard from the social workers how effective the implementation of designated weeks and days at the school level can be.
- We heard again that principals need to be allies, and that staff need to address insensitive comments and inappropriate language by anyone in the community when heard in the school building.
- There needs to be consistency in trainings/messaging.

	Creating an Inclusive Work Environment: • LGBT staff must feel safe, and to do that the school-based staff and administration need to be educated on creating a safe space. • Clear behavioral expectations are needed for everyone in the school, and they should be stressed at the administrative level. • Team-building events should be important at the schools to foster general open dialogue. *Welcoming all Families:* • At the school level, offer family workshops, support groups, get-togethers, etc. These should be planned in collaboration with staff and families from the school itself in order to make it relevant. • There should be a newsletter, blog etc. at every school, and they should include any educational or policy information. • Families should be included in school plans, including trainings. *Linking Schools and Communities:* • Staff must be trained on resources available, and resources should be included in all parent information tables, mailings, etc. They should also be made available online. • We have a lot of great resources in DC-including community collaboratives in most neighborhoods-and we need to use them.
Resource Review	The committee reviewed available resources that may be useful for each of the subcommittees: *Bullied: Bullied* is a documentary which chronicles the harassment experienced throughout secondary school by a gay student, and the actions he took to fight for his right to be safe at school. Accompanying the film is a viewer's guide to using it to help teach tolerance in schools. This film is published by the Teaching Tolerance program at the Southern Poverty Law Center, and more information can be found here: http://www.tolerance.org/bullied. "Supportive Families, Healthy Children: Helping Families with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Children" is a publication of the Family Acceptance Project (FAP) at San Francisco State University, which studies the ways that reactions of families may affect the health and wellness of LGBT youth. It can be found at: http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/publications. "Families Matter: New Research Calls for a Revolution in Public Policy for LGBT Children and Youth" by The Center for American Progress is also a useful resource, explaining how the Family Acceptance Project research may be used to address public policy and programs.

	"Addressing the Urgent Needs of DC Area LGBTQ Youth" by the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League (SMYAL). In January 2011, SMYAL released a community report on the needs of DC youth identifying as LGBTQ. Included are several recommendations for community stakeholders to ensure the health and safety of these youth. The report may be found here: http://smyal.org/admin/Editor/uploads/2011CommunityReportWebVersion.pdf. The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) has a training of trainers (TOT) program for educators and community members on learning how to develop programs to make schools safer for LGBTQ youth. They also publish how-to guides for secondary students on implementing a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) in their school. These and other GLSEN resources and research may be found here: http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/what/index.html. GLSEN also provides a Safe Space training and toolkit, found here: http://safespace.glsen.org. The Trevor Project, an organization focusing on suicide prevention of LGBTQ youth, may provide training for school staff on depression and suicide in LGBTQ youth, including their unique risk factors and ways to prevent them. The Trevor Project also offers a variety of other educational resources and services that can be found on their website at www.trevorproject.org. The San Francisco Unified School District's Student Support Services Department has a very useful program and website for their educators to address LGBTQ topics in school. It can be found at: http://healthiersf.org/LGBTQ/index.cfm.
Subcommittee Breakout	Committee members broke into subcommittees aligned with each key area of work, and continued to work on their action plans for each area, indicating what actions should be taken, who should do them, and by when. The action plans will be used by DCPS to create a draft plan for this work, which will be reviewed at the next steering committee meeting.
Next Steps	Next meeting of LGBTQ Steering Committee is **Tuesday, March 29 at 5:30pm**. Participation on the Steering Committee will require a monthly meeting commitment in the coming months to develop the plan, and a quarterly meeting commitment after that to monitor implementation. Additional feedback in between meetings can be provided via email, sent to andrea.desantis@dc.gov. For more information contact Andrea DeSantis, Risk Reduction Coordinator, at andrea.desantis@dc.gov or 202.442.5040.